

Animal Identification, a Reality or Simply a Perception

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There is a point of frustration in the beef industry. The U.S. currently produces healthy, wholesome beef, ready for American consumption and export to the world. Yet, as an industry, we produce our own barriers and then commence to trip over them in a seemingly endless array of missed opportunities.

There always should be something substantial and factual to what we read or spend much time listening to. The future really needs to be guided by facts that substantiate reality and are clearly different than positioned perception.

In the animal world, the problem is that there seems to be a strong desire to function in the world of perception, relegating the reality of animal identification and traceback to desired obscurity. One should ask how many times does the system need to fail.

As one grows up and before one really knows any facts, we all live in the assumption that all that is around us is real. The house we live in has been there forever, the food that appears at mealtime never ends and there always will be another cookie on the plate. At some point, this perception of the world gradually gives way to reality.

The reality is that the world around us can be harsh, not all people get along and bad things can happen. How long the animal world can avoid the realities of a very dynamic world and continue to live in the clouds of perception is not known. Perhaps a long time, but the point still remains, the current perceptions within the environment of the animal industry are tenacious, with various factions of the industry anchored to ideals and principles with very little connection to reality. The finger pointing is excessive, regardless of what segment of the industry currently is at the podium.

The latest bit of news regarding the questionable origin of cattle slaughtered last fall, but only noted this year, continues to call for some type of explanation. The reality is there is no answer.

The simple fact of the matter is that the U.S. beef

industry has a very antiquated system of tags, paper and files, and limited people to even think about coming up with any sort of answer in any reasonable response time. The answer is even more distant, when one concludes that the typical animal marketed loses all identity at sale, may be commingled with several, if not hundreds, of other similar looking animals and then joins the ranks of the unknown.

And then there is concern when a problem arises. You said, no he said, no she said or maybe I think, but I don't really know which black calf it was. The reality is we don't know. The U.S. has a very wholesome, reputable beef industry, an industry that must be healthy as a whole, not as factions.

No one group can have cattle that are more wholesome than the next. No country can have cattle that are more wholesome than the next and no producer, company or cooperative can produce food that is more wholesome or healthy than the next. The bottom line is that people expect all food to be wholesome and contribute to their health and wellness. And so, the current squabble continues.

The irony is that the foundation of the beef industry prides itself on individualism. Yet individualism only survives along side responsibility. It is this responsibility, nested within cooperation, that needs to rise up and solve the task at hand.

The industry needs a modern, effective system of individual accountability, a system respectful of local concerns, but responsive to industry needs and consumer desires. Amongst the never-ending confusion, positioning and jostling, one can only hope some light will come to the podium.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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